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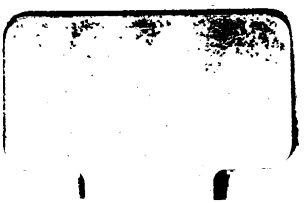
APRIL 8, 1902.



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THE

# CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

OF THE

# Society of Friends,

## COMMENDED TO ITS MEMBERS.

BY

EDWARD ASH.

LONDON:
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# PREFACE.

THE following pages were written chiefly with a view to my fellow-members of the religious Society of Friends, and especially to the younger part of them. Perhaps however their contents will not be without interest to some others, who, from whatever cause, may have more or less directed their attention to us.

It is abundantly evident that the real character of those principles and views by which our society is chiefly distinguished, is very imperfectly apprehended, even by many of our own members; and this is necessarily the case, in a much greater degree, with others, whose opportunities of obtaining correct information are generally far less favour-

able. I am well aware that ample means already exist for such as are willing to take the pains to inform themselves on the subject. It has however appeared to me that there are at the present time circumstances which justify such an attempt as that which I have here ventured to make.

Though I by no means wish to bring against any one the charge of intentionally misrepresenting our principles and views, I cannot hesitate to say that they have been misrepresented to a great extent in many recent publications. From the operation of this and other causes, many of our members have been led to form a very erroneous estimate of the character of that profession in which they have been educated; have in great measure overlooked its excellence; and are thus in danger of lightly esteeming, and ultimately abandoning that of which they do not

perceive the value. It was with a particular view to this state of things that the following observations were written.

I believe that I can truly disclaim any feeling of bigotry or sectarian narrowness. I well know, and gladly acknowledge, that vital religion is not confined to any one section of the visible church; and most cordially can I adopt the language of the apostle, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Nevertheless, valuing, as I do, that profession in which I have been educated, because I believe it to be not only consonant with the truth of the gospel, but also eminently calculated, when practically applied, to promote vital religion; and feeling thankful to the Father of mercies, that my lot has been cast among this people, I cannot but affectionally desire for others, especially for my younger friends, that they may duly appreciate its value, and

not lightly part with those privileges which the good providence of God has placed within their reach. In offering these pages to their serious consideration, I trust I am actuated by a higher motive than that of merely wishing them to remain in outward fellowship with myself,—an earnest desire for their own spiritual welfare, and for their usefulness in the church of Christ.

*First Month*, 1837.

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THE

# CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

OF

## The Society of Friends.

NATURE AND END OF TRUE RELIGION—LAW OF MOSES—GOSPEL OF CHRIST—GREAT APOSTACY—REFORMATION—GEORGE FOX AND HIS FELLOW-LABOURERS—STATE OF RELIGION IN THIS COUNTRY AT THAT PERIOD.

THE all-important subject which religion embraces, is the relation in which man, considered as an accountable and immortal being, stands to his Almighty Creator. It is therefore, in its nature, essentially a spiritual thing. And as its nature is spiritual, so is the end to which it is directed. By reason of the fall of our first parents, man is in heart alienated from the love of God, and in conduct opposed to his will; and the end of all true religion is to effect such a change in him, as that he may be recovered from

this state of alienation and rebellion, be restored to the favour of the Almighty, and be prepared to dwell with him in eternal blessedness.

To this great end, the communications of God to man, the revelations of his mind and will, and the several dispensations which he has from time to time appointed, have been constantly directed; and they have therefore had respect to the means by which that end was to be accomplished, the coming and propitiatory sacrifice of the Son of God. It was he who was the great subject and theme of prophecy in every age; who was typified in the patriarchal sacrifices, and in the significant ritual of the Mosaic law. As, however, in the eternal wisdom and counsels of God, the manifestation and offering of Christ were reserved for the latter times, when the way should be prepared for his coming; so, in like manner, the full and perfect exhibition of the spiritual nature and end of religion was reserved for that period; a system of ceremonial rites and carnal ordinances being meanwhile provided, adapted to the then condition of men, and "imposed on them until the time of reformation."

When he, of whom all these things were but types and figures, was come, and had finished that work which was given him to do, the various rites and ceremonies which had been previously connected with divine worship, having accomplished their service, were no longer needed or enjoined. Worship, as set forth in the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, was exhibited in its true and simple character, as consisting in the communion of the soul with God, not necessarily including any external manifestation whatever, and rightly admitting such only as, by virtue of the mixed constitution of man's nature, is the proper outward expression of his inward state and affections.

In unison with this change in the character of worship, there was no longer to be any outward house or temple, where God would peculiarly manifest himself to his people, and receive their offerings. Thenceforward the renewed heart of man was the only true temple of the living God; and though particular places might be set apart for the special purpose of devotion, whether individual or social, their appropriation could have respect only to matters of decorum

and convenience:—holiness was no longer to be the attribute of any house made with hands.

And as there was a change thus made in regard to the worship to be performed, and the temple in which it was to be offered, so was there, in like manner, in that of the priesthood to be employed in offering it. The ceremonial worship which the law of Moses prescribed, required the intervention of a particular class of men, set apart for that purpose, and inheriting their office by natural descent, being "made after the law of a carnal commandment." But as this priesthood typified Christ, the great High Priest of his people, and only Mediator between God and man, so, when he came, and having offered up one sacrifice for sins, had entered into the holy place once for all, its service was accomplished; nor does any order of human priesthood appertain to his church, excepting so far as all its living members, without distinction, are accounted "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." It is true that there are, in the church of Christ, various gifts and offices, whereby one may edify another; but

as these are in their nature wholly distinct from the service of the Levitical priesthood, so are the possession and exercise of them derived in a manner wholly different; not from a carnal inheritance, but from a spiritual endowment.

Nor was this more full exhibition of the spiritual nature and end of religion, which was consequent on the coming of Christ, confined to the abrogation of ceremonial institutions. It was also seen in respect of that part of the law which we term moral, and which is in its nature permanent, being coæval with the relation in which man stands both to God and to his fellow-men. The precepts of our Lord and his apostles, in various respects enlarged and carried out the import of those which had been delivered by Moses; and many things were prohibited by them, which, under a less perfect dispensation, had been appointed or permitted, as adapted to the then state and circumstances of men. It may further be observed, that the greater part of the precepts of the moral law, as delivered by Moses, had respect to the visible conduct and outward actions of men, which may, to no small extent, be conformed to their

requirements, while the heart is at enmity against God. But the moral law, as interpreted and enforced by Christ and his apostles, chiefly had respect to the state of the heart and the affections, to that which, when it is conformed to the divine will, necessarily manifests itself in a visible obedience to its dictates. And thus, when the dispensation of the gospel was brought in, the law was at the same time set forth in its perfect purity and spirituality.

Such were some of the changes which religion underwent, in the character of its manifestation, by the introduction of the gospel dispensation, of that spiritual kingdom which our blessed Lord came to set up, and which consists essentially in his dominion over the hearts of men; a dominion, of which their visible conformity to his will and precepts, is at once the effect and the indication.

But although that spiritual dispensation which was brought in by the coming of Christ, was designed eventually to supersede the less perfect institutions which preceded it, its manifestation and establishment were gradual, in conformity with the general economy of the dealings of

the Most High with men. Even prior to our Lord's appearance on earth, indications of the great approaching change were not wanting. The language of the prophets presented, in many respects, a more spiritual view of religion than that of the law. We have reason to believe that the glory of the temple worship had been in some measure obscured after the return from the captivity; and while the Mosaic ritual was yet in force, it appears to have given increasing indications of decay, as the time appointed for its cessation drew near. Thus the few among the Jewish nation who were more than in name the people of God, seem to have been in some degree prepared for the substitution of a more spiritual dispensation, in the room of that which had been handed down to them from their fathers.

It was then that John the Baptist appeared, the Elias who was to go before the face of the Lord, and to prepare his way. He came indeed, "in the spirit and power" of that eminent prophet, assuming, like him, the character of a reformer of his nation. But there was an important difference in the nature of the refor-

mation which he sought to effect. The mission of the first Elias was to overthrow the idolatrous worship of Baal, and to restore the worship of the true God, as performed in the ceremonial of the Jewish law. The second Elias had a charge of a more spiritual nature. He interfered not with the outward conducting of worship. Though born of a priestly family, he did not minister in the temple, but abode in the wilderness. His mission was to preach repentance,—even a change in the heart and affections;—and to enjoin that observance of the moral precepts of the law, which is its appropriate fruit. And it was in token of this change that he came baptizing with water.

As John was sent to prepare the way for Christ, so he assigned, as the ground of his preaching repentance, the near approach of the kingdom of heaven. And although Christ himself came not merely to announce, but to set up that kingdom, yet, since its establishment was not to be effected till he had fully accomplished his work on earth, we find that his own language, and that of his apostles during his abode on earth, was the same with that of John,

—"the kingdom of heaven is *at hand.*" It was not till he had ascended up on high, and had sent upon his chosen apostles, on the memorable day of Pentecost, the promise of the Father, that his kingdom, as a visible dispensation, was actually set up on earth. And even then, the spirituality of its character was not at once fully understood or exhibited.

Not only did the outward ritual of the Jewish worship subsist for many years longer, but, as our Lord had not directed his followers to disuse it, they, being themselves Jews, continued to observe its institutions. Far from yet clearly seeing to the end of that which was to be abolished, their first conception of the subject seems to have been, that the religion of Jesus was to be engrafted on the law of Moses; and that the observance of that law was to be imposed on all the disciples of their master. The first considerable change in this view, was exhibited in the admission of uncircumcised men into the church, on the occasion of the apostle Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius; a change for which, however, that apostle was only prepared by a special message from heaven. Next came

the decision of the apostles and brethren assembled in Jerusalem, giving the sanction of the church to this important change, and solemnly declaring that the Jewish law was not to be imposed upon the Gentile believers. Yet still the Jews themselves continued to observe it; and one of the last pages of the New Testament history presents the great apostle of the Gentiles himself complying with its ceremonial provisions.

We find however in some of the epistles, which are either known or believed to have been written by this apostle, a plain and full intimation of that great change which the coming of Christ was to effect in the character of religion. Not only does he in various places insist on the perfect equality of Jews and Gentiles in the church of Christ; but we find him, in his epistle to the Galatians, expressly forbidding his Gentile converts to have recourse to the ceremonial rites of the Jewish law. It is however in the epistle to the Hebrews, to the Jewish believers themselves, that the subject is most fully developed. There we find the important truth copiously and emphatically

announced, that the whole Mosaic ritual was but an institution for the time then being, a shadow of good things to come, to be superseded when the things themselves should have been brought to light.

The accomplishment of this result was not however, as we have already seen, provided for by any express command or direction. No instruction to disuse the ceremonial law is to be found in the language of Christ or his apostles. It should seem that the preparation for, and gradual progress of the change to be effected, were left to the natural operation of the gospel dispensation, as the minds of men should become increasingly enlightened to discern its true spiritual character. In this, as in other respects, the epistles contain evidence of the fulfilment of our Lord's promise to his immediate followers, that the Comforter should hereafter reveal to them truths which they were not able to receive while he himself was yet with them. Thus was the way gradually prepared for that announcement of the end of the dispensation of the law, which was made in terms intelligible to the slowest apprehension,—when

the temple was so utterly destroyed, that not one stone was left upon another; and when every provision for that ceremonial worship which had once been so glorious, was entirely swept away.

It might have been expected, that from this time the disciples of Jesus would have exibited the religion of their divine Master in its full and unobscured spirituality. But to whatever degree this may for a time have been the case, the seemingly inveterate tendency of man to substitute shadow for substance, form for vitality, and outward performances for an inward work, was soon lamentably manifested. At a very early period of the church, Jewish and heathenish forms and institutions began to be introduced. These progressively accumulated, as the great apostacy more and more developed its pernicious growth; till at length the true characters of the visible church of Christ were almost lost throughout the world; and, with the exception of some secluded and obscure spots, were hardly to be discerned amidst the mass of Jewish ceremonies and heathenish idolatry, which had been accumulated around it.

At length, after a long night of darkness and ignorance, it pleased the Almighty that an increase of light should arise upon the church, by the means of that reformation of which Wicliffe and others were the beginners, but which was more fully brought about by the labours of Martin Luther and his contemporaries. By their instrumentality, religion was disincumbered of many of those things which had so greatly obscured its spirituality during the night of the apostacy; and some advance was made towards exhibiting it in its true character.

At a later period, a still further progress was made in the work of reformation in our own country among the Puritans, and some of those various denominations of christian professors which appeared about the time of the commonwealth. By them, many of those corruptions which the national church had retained after its separation from that of Rome, were rejected; and in various respects a nearer approach was made to a spiritual view of the nature of religion: not a little however yet remained to be done.

It was during this period that George Fox entered upon those public labours which resulted

in the gathering together of the religious Society of Friends. But though he may be regarded as the first and chief instrument in this work, he found many scattered among the different bodies of professors, already more or less prepared to unite in his views, and cooperate in his labours. He believed that his own mind had been opened by the Spirit of truth to a clearer discernment of the spiritual nature of religion than was then received or taught; and that he was required publicly to testify of that which he had learned, to call men away from their dependence upon human teachers, and to direct them to that divine Teacher by whose enlightening power he himself had been brought to the knowledge of the truth.

Before however I proceed to give some account of the views and practices of the early Friends, it seems proper briefly to advert to the circumstances by which the religion of that period was more or less characterized, in matters both of doctrine and of practice. Without such a view, we shall not be qualified to form a right estimate of the various particulars by which George Fox and his fellow-labourers were

distinguished from the generality of professors of that day.

It appears, not only from the narratives and writings of the first members of our society, but also from the testimony of other contemporary authors, that there was at that period a great deal of high profession of religion, unaccompanied by change of heart, and therefore unproductive of the fruits of the Spirit. Thus, the avowal of an orthodox belief, the outward performance of certain exercises, as prayer and singing, the punctual attendance of public worship, or, more properly, of the services of those appointed to conduct it, the administration of water-baptism, and the periodical partaking of bread and wine, were in the general more insisted upon, or at least practically more attended to, than the necessity of regeneration and conversion, and the obligation of personal holiness.

In representing this as an extensively prevalent state of things at that time, I do not forget how many there were among the different religious sects, eminent for their fervent zeal, their exemplary lives, and the generally sound and practical character of their ministry and

writings. It is probable that amidst the heat of controversy, some of the first Friends did not sufficiently appreciate the degree in which vital religion was thus found among those who differed from, or opposed them. But while we gladly admit that there were not a few who enforced, both by precept and example, the practical nature of true religion; who insisted on the worthlessness of its mere profession; and who dwelt largely and forcibly on the work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of men, it is evident that these things had but little place with the great majority of the professors of christianity, and indeed with no small portion of its teachers. And even as it respects those whose views were the most spiritual, there is, I conceive, sufficient evidence that some important parts of christian doctrine, in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit, were in the general imperfectly apprehended, and inadequately enforced. The fulness and excellence of those privileges which the disciple of Jesus may enjoy in the indwelling of the Spirit of truth, as his counsellor, teacher, and guide; and the presence of this

Spirit in the church, as the source of the only right authority for the exercise of the ministry and other offices, were far from being distinctly understood or acknowledged, and still more so from being practically applied.

Besides this generally defective character of the doctrinal views of those times, there were some particular errors or perversions of doctrine, which seem to have had a pernicious influence on the minds of many of the professors of religion. While justification by faith was strongly insisted upon, the necessity of good works, as the natural and constant fruit, effect, and evidence of living faith, was often too little heeded, and sometimes virtually denied. Again, while the sovereignty of divine grace in the election of God's people was strenuously contended for, this election was too often represented as if it were wholly irrespective of the new birth and sanctification; and on the other hand, reprobation was spoken of as if it were the effect of an absolute and eternal decree of the Almighty, instead of being a consequence of the rejection of his proffered mercy. Nearly allied to these errors, was that of teaching that

it is impossible for man to abstain from the commission of sin during the present life; a doctrine which, in connexion with those above-mentioned, powerfully tended to carelessness and licentiousness, and too often led the way to practical antinomianism.

In addition to what was unsound or imperfect in doctrine, there was much in the allowed practice of all classes of professors, which is at variance with the precepts and example of Christ and his apostles. War and oaths were almost universally allowed and justified; and not only was Christ's authority in his own church virtually set at nought by the manner in which its ministers were ordinarily appointed, and by the mode in which they for the most part exercised their office; but the spirit and freeness of his gospel were also infringed upon by a system of stated payment, whether compulsory or otherwise, for their services. Further, although the thoughtless pleasures and gross vices of the avowedly licentious were shunned by the professors of godliness; and although many of these exhibited, both by precept and example, a comparatively high standard of practical holi-

ness, there was among all classes a general conformity to the customs and fashions of the world, in many things repugnant to christian simplicity and truth.

Such was the more or less prevailing character of the religion of the period in which our society had its origin; and it will be found that the doctrines and practices which were chiefly insisted upon by its first members, were such as had an immediate reference to these errors and defects.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE DOCTRINES AND PRACTICE OF THE FIRST FRIENDS—OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST SOME OF THEIR DOCTRINAL EXPRESSIONS CONSIDERED—EVIDENCE OF THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE WORK IN WHICH THEY WERE ENGAGED.

AMONG those things to which the early Friends bore witness in their ministry and writings, they taught that true religion implies a real change of heart, of which holiness of life and conversation is the necessary and inseparable fruit and evidence: that without this change, the profession of an orthodox belief, the knowledge of the contents of holy scripture, the punctual observance of the forms of worship, and the diligent attendance of public ministration, are of no avail: that it is to no purpose to hear and admit all that Christ did and suffered for us, unless we so believe on him as that he dwells in us by the Spirit: that baptism with water, and the ceremonial partaking of bread and wine, are not only inefficacious in themselves, but were never enjoined as perpetual

ordinances in the church of Christ, nor constitute any essential part of the new covenant dispensation: that God, by his Spirit, visits and strives with the children of men in order to their salvation: that in those who resist not, but give heed to this visitation, the Holy Spirit begets true repentance and living faith, and dwells in them, not only as their sanctifier, but also as their teacher, counsellor, and guide: that it is only by the revelation of the Spirit that the doctrines of Christ and his apostles, and the contents of holy scripture generally, can be rightly apprehended and made effectual to the conversion of the heart: that without his presence and influence, true worship cannot be performed, nor prayer and praise acceptably offered: and, that as Christ is the supreme head and governor of his own church, being present with and presiding over it by the Spirit, it is only under the immediate guidance and authority of the Spirit, that the government and discipline of the church can be duly ordered and administered; and in an especial manner, that thus only can any be rightly called to the work of the ministry, be instructed as to the time, man-

ner, and place of their particular services, or be qualified for their performance. As they taught that those only are rightly appointed ministers who are thus called and qualified, so they testified that the gift of the ministry is alike bestowed upon male and female, learned and unlearned, even as it was in the primitive church: and as they recognized no exercise of the ministry but such as is under the immediate anointing of the Spirit, they taught that when the church came together for public worship, its members were not to engage in any outward exercise in their own will, and manner, and time, but were to wait in silence before the Lord, seeking for ability to worship him in spirit and in truth, and looking to him alone for instruction and help, whether he might be pleased to impart it immediately, or by the mouth of any of his servants.

In regard to matters of doctrine, they further taught, that faith without works is dead: that believers are not only exhorted to abstain from all sin, but are assured that divine grace can enable them so to do: that since the election of God is "through sanctification of the

Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," none are to be accounted among the number of his elect, but such as give evidence, in a holy life and conversation, that they are truly disciples of Christ: and that as the gospel offers salvation to all, without distinction or limitation, none are accounted reprobate but such as reject it or fall away from it.

They further testified that all wars and fightings are utterly repugnant to the spirit and precepts of the gospel; that oaths are not only precluded by that uncompromising adherence to truth which the gospel inculcates, but that they were also expressly forbidden by Christ and his apostle James; that every kind of forced maintenance for the ministers of religion, is directly opposed to the character and provisions of the gospel dispensation; and that even their acceptance of voluntary payment is at variance with the Spirit of our Lord's injunction, "Freely ye have received: freely give;" except in so far as the services into which they may from time to time be called, render it needful that their outward wants should be supplied.

Lastly, they not only bore an open testimony

against the vices and follies which were generally disallowed by those who made a profession of religion, but they constantly taught that the disciples of Christ are called upon to come out from the world; to renounce its spirit; not to seek its greatness, its riches, or its pleasures; and to abstain from every thing in its maxims, fashions, and observances, which is inconsistent with a strict adherence to truth, and with that plainness, simplicity, and self-denial, which become the high calling of those who profess not to "live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again." In carrying into their own practice that which they thus inculcated upon others, their conduct was remarkably characterized by a steady refusal to sacrifice truth and principle to expediency; so that they chose rather to endure the greatest sufferings, than to yield a compliance, even in things which the world accounted trivial, when it was at variance with what they deemed to be the standard of truth and righteousness.

But powerful and consistent as was the testimony which they bore to the spirituality of the gospel dispensation, and strikingly as they

exhibited in their own conduct the excellency of that truth which they professed, we are not to suppose that they were exempt from human infirmity; or that, in carrying on the work to which they were called, they did not at times mingle with it that which showed that the treasure which they had was nevertheless "in earthen vessels." Although it is not my purpose to enter upon any detailed examination of this subject, I do not think it expedient to pass it by wholly unnoticed; more especially considering the manner in which the views and conduct of our early Friends have of late been brought forward. Whatever degree of infirmity may have been mingled with the work in which they were engaged, the origin and true character of the work itself rest on evidence not to be shaken by such adventitious mixture; and I am persuaded that a candid estimate of their history and writings will lead to the conviction that, considered in their general character as a body, they were true believers in, and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It would seem as though, when a great work is to be accomplished in the church, men en-

dowed with minds of more than common force and energy, are generally employed as the chief instruments for carrying it on: and such minds, we well know, are the most likely to be drawn into extremes, especially before age and experience have tempered and regulated the fervour of their zeal. There is besides a natural tendency in the excitement which prevails at such periods, to carry those who largely partake of it beyond the bounds of moderation. If, from the operation of these and other similar causes, we should meet with some circumstances in the history of the early Friends, which we cannot approve or justify, let us remember that they were by no means peculiar to them, but were also seen in many others during that period of religious excitement: and far from being a predominant character of their history, they were of comparatively rare occurrence, and in great measure confined to the first few years of the society, before it had attained that settled order which was afterwards established among its members.

Observations of the same general character are equally applicable to those objections which

have been brought against them, in relation to matters of doctrine. There is a strong tendency in the mind of man, one which is continually exhibited in regard to all subjects which powerfully engage his attention, and certainly not least so as to that of religion, by reason of which, when he is intent upon the pursuit and support of truth in one direction, he is liable more or less to overlook it in another, and thus to be drawn into extreme or exclusive statements respecting it. I believe that whatever is met with in the doctrinal expressions and statements of our early writers that is justly liable to exception, is mainly referrible to this cause: and when we consider how largely they were involved in controversy, and how earnestly they were engaged, in the midst of opposition and obloquy, to contend for some most important points of christian truth, it cannot appear surprising if they should at times have expressed themselves in a manner seemingly more or less at variance with other parts of truth no less important.

As has been already observed, they considered themselves especially called to uphold the spi-

rituality of true religion, and to testify of it as an inward work wrought in the heart of man by the power of the Holy Ghost. We may well make some allowance for them if, in their zeal to do this, and to vindicate the unrestricted power of divine grace to work without the intervention of outward means, they did not at all times duly advert to the undoubted truth, that in the ordinary economy of his grace, the Almighty has seen meet to employ such means for carrying on his work upon the earth.

It was, in like manner, in their zeal to contend for the universality of the love of God in Christ, and to oppose the unscriptural dogma which represents all to whom the truths of scripture are not made known as being thereby necessarily excluded from Christ's salvation, that some of them occasionally used expressions which may be thought scarcely compatible with a due appreciation of those blessings and privileges which are conveyed to man through the publication of the gospel;—even that gospel which our blessed Lord commanded his disciples to preach "to every creature," and which, being made effectual by the work of the Holy Spirit,

becomes, as the apostle expresses it, "the power of God unto salvation."

In the same way, in their earnest concern to uphold that important part of divine truth which relates to the work of the Spirit in man, testifying that without his enlightening operation no man can truly receive the things of God, and bearing witness to his immediate teaching and guidance, they may sometimes have expressed themselves in a manner which is liable to exception.

We have abundant evidence, not only that they fully acknowledged the divine authority of the holy scriptures, but also that the sacred writings were truly precious to them, and that it was their concern to receive the doctrines and obey the precepts contained in them. If then at any time they used expressions seemingly not consonant with that important relation in which the scriptures stand to us, as containing an authentic record of the doctrine of our Lord and his apostles, and being the appointed channel, in the providence of God, for handing down the knowledge of that doctrine through the successive ages of the church, it must be ascrib-

ed to their zeal to uphold the above-mentioned truth, and to contend against some prevalent errors which were opposed to it.

It was, I apprehend, from a like concern to maintain the truth against the erroneous statements of their opponents, that some of them were led to adopt certain peculiar modes of expression respecting the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. I allude particularly to that manner of distinguishing between "Christ," and "his outward body," which has been so prominently brought forward in some recent publications. Such a distinction does not appear to me to be in accordance with the language of Scripture; for the epithet *Christ*, or *the Anointed*, is there applied, without restriction or division of any kind, to Jesus of Nazareth, who was the Word made flesh, being at once God and man; even to Him "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification;" and who dwells in the hearts of his people by faith. But into whatever inaccuracy of expression any of our writers may have fallen in regard to this subject, their works contain abundant evidence that they fully

received the great doctrine of the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is undoubtedly to the operation of the same general tendency that we are to attribute those expressions which have been objected to in relation to the doctrine of justification. If in some of their writings so much place is not given as we might desire to the important truth so repeatedly and emphatically declared in scripture, that we are "justified by faith," it must be ascribed to their earnest concern to enforce the immutable obligation of the precept, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," and to contend against every thing that tended to antinomianism, whether in doctrine or in practice. In whatever degree any of their statements on this point may appear defective, I conceive their writings sufficiently testify that they cordially received the doctrine of the apostle, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." The precious doctrine of justification by faith has indeed been greatly abused and perverted by many of the professors of the christian name. When how-

ever it is rightly understood and applied, it will be found no less promotive of personal holiness, than it is full of comfort and support to the weary and heavy-laden. The faith which justifies, of which the apostle Paul so largely speaks, is no empty notion or profession, no mere act of the understanding; but, being begotten in man by the Holy Spirit, it purifies the heart, and works by love to the fulfilling of the law. And the doctrine of James, if rightly understood, will be found in perfect harmony with that of Paul; setting forth that the faith which is without works, which is not accompanied by the fruits of the Spirit, cannot justify, but is profitless and dead.

In thus adverting to the objections which have been urged against certain doctrinal expressions and statements in the writings of some of our early members, and in admitting that they are not altogether unfounded, I am aware that there will be some diversity of opinion among us in regard to the extent to which such an admission is called for. A diversity of this kind seems unavoidable, when we consider the different degrees in which individuals have given

their attention to the subject, their different estimate of the import and meaning of particular expressions, and other causes of a like general nature. But leaving these questions, I wish to recall the reader's attention to my principal design in adverting to the subject of which I have now been speaking. It has been to show that such expressions and statements in the writings of our early Friends as may be thought liable to objection, had their origin in a too exclusive and unguarded manner of insisting on certain important parts of divine truth, attributable to the eagerness of controversy and other circumstances peculiar to those times; and that they cannot justly be ascribed to the disesteem, much less to the rejection of any of the essential doctrines of christianity.

That these doctrines have always been held and maintained by the Society of Friends as a body, and by those of its individual members whose writings are the most esteemed among us, rests on evidence which I believe to be wholly incontrovertible. It is not by taking detached passages from the writings of an au-

thor, especially those of a controversial character, (and such were most of the doctrinal works of our early writers,) that a just estimate will be formed of his real opinions. To arrive at this, we must examine his writings as a whole; and if this test be applied to our most esteemed authors, I am persuaded that their essential soundness in the faith will be fully established. We have moreover ample documentary evidence that whenever the Society's adherence to the great doctrines of the gospel has been challenged in such a way as to call for notice, it has been always prompt to meet and disprove the charge by an explicit declaration of its faith. So also does its history testify that whenever any of its members have openly avowed, or sought to propagate opinions at variance with the great truths of the gospel, they have been uniformly met by express declarations of the continued adherence of the body to its original faith, and by the separation of such members from its communion.[1]

[1] For proofs of the statements made in this paragraph, the reader is referred to the preface to the third edition of the society's "Rules of Discipline and Advices;" to

Before leaving this subject, I wish briefly to advert to two points which appear to me to have an important bearing upon it. I believe it will be found that many of those expressions which are objected to in our early writers, are referable to the misinterpretation or misapplication of particular passages of scripture; and this again to a practice, perhaps then more common than it now is, and certainly not confined to our own society, of detaching passages from their context, and thereby giving them a different aspect from that which they have when viewed in connexion with it. It is obvious that controversial writers are peculiarly liable to fall into this error, seeing that their immediate object is rather to collect and adduce evidence in favour of the particular points which they are solicitous to establish, than to examine and weigh the testimony of scripture as a whole.

Another point which it is very important to bear in mind, is the great extent to which many

Thos. Evans's "Exposition of the Faith of the Society of Friends;" to the Declaration issued by the Yearly Meeting of Philadelphia in 1828; and to the Printed Epistle of the Yearly Meeting of London in 1836.

of the objections which we have been considering are resolvable into questions respecting the use of particular terms. While it must, I think, be admitted that our writers have fallen into some errors in this respect; and while we fully recognize the importance, not only of using scripture terms, but also of using them in a scriptural sense, we must not overlook the essential distinction between the question of an author's real and obvious meaning, and that of the appropriateness of the terms in which he expresses himself.

We have a prominent illustration of these general remarks in the copious use which, as is well known, many of the early Friends made of the word *light.* There may be diversities of opinion as to the various senses in which this word is used in scripture, and consequently as to the use which has been made of it in our own society; but this much is certain, that when George Fox spoke of "the light of Christ," and employed other similar expressions, he meant nothing else than the enlightening operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man; and so these terms have been always

understood in the society down to the present time.[2] The same general remarks are applicable to the use which has been made of the terms *word, gospel, seed,* &c. by some of our writers.

Another illustration of the manner in which the use of terms bears upon this general subject, is found in that of the word *justification.* Some of our writers appear to have understood this term in a two-fold sense; implying, in the one, the forgiveness of past sins; in the other, the notion of sanctification. Whether the use of the term in scripture warrants this two-fold interpretation, may be questionable; but it is obviously necessary to bear it in mind in forming a judgment of the doctrinal views of those writers who have adopted it.

There is one point of view in which the whole subject of the alleged defects in the views and writings of our early members may be profitably contemplated. Whether we admit their existence in a greater or lesser degree, they

[2] "Like our early Friends, we believe in no principle whatsoever of spiritual light, life, or holiness, except the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, bestowed on mankind, in various measures and degrees, through Jesus Christ our Lord." *London Yearly Meeting's Epistle,* 1836.

admonish us not to place an undue confidence in our fellow-men, however eminent their gifts, or high their attainments in spiritual things. Perhaps in times past we may not have been wholly exempt from error in this direction. It must however be obvious, that many are now disposed to fall into a mistake of a very opposite nature; and in the acuteness of their apprehension of what they deem to be objectionable, are in danger of overlooking and losing the benefit of that which is truly valuable. A right estimate of the value of those memorials which are left to us of the doctrines, experience, and labours of our predecessors, will be as far removed from neglect or contempt on the one hand, as from a blind partiality and deference on the other. If the one extreme would expose us to the danger of giving to the writings of our own authors that authority which exclusively belongs to the records of divine revelation handed down to us in the holy scriptures, the other would deprive us of a rich treasury of practical and experimental religion, and of much valuable doctrinal instruction.

In relation to this subject, I would add one

further observation, which appears to me to be deserving of our close attention. The society has from the beginning not only explicitly recognized the divine authority of the holy scriptures, and declared its willingness to have all its doctrines judged of by them, but has again and again urgently pressed their frequent and diligent perusal upon its members. In proportion as this advice is attended to, and we are diligent, according to our several opportunities, in reading and searching the sacred writings, in reverent dependence upon the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, at the same time applying those natural and acquired faculties which God, in his good providence, has bestowed upon us, we shall be likely to arrive at a just apprehension of the truths which are there recorded.

Having thus adverted, so far as appeared necessary, to the objections which have of late been so much urged against the views and writings of our early Friends, I will now return to the more immediate object of this address. Whatever may have been the measure of human infirmity which was intermixed with the

work in which they were engaged, I cannot hesitate to regard that work as having been truly not of man, but of God. That this character ought to be ascribed to it, appears to me to be attested by various and conclusive evidence.

I find such evidence in the clear and faithful testimony which they bore to the spirituality of the new covenant dispensation, in the midst of so general a departure from the purity and simplicity of the gospel; in their powerful and consistent maintenance of the great principle that religion consists not in a confession of the lips, or an assent of the understanding, but in a change of the heart and affections; and in the eminent degree in which they enforced, not only by word, but also by example, the necessity of holiness of life and conversation, of spiritual-mindedness, of deadness to the world, of devotedness to Christ and his service, and of the renunciation of whatever is at variance with the truth as it is in him.

I see the like evidence in those views of the nature of true worship, and of the right ground and authority of christian ministry, which they

upheld and practised; and in the efficacy of their own labours in gathering multitudes to an experience of that power of godliness to which they themselves had attained. It is, I conceive, further apparent in their testimony against war, oaths, tithes, and whatever else is opposed to the pure and spiritual character of the gospel of Christ; in their willingness to suffer for conscience sake; in their patience under suffering, and their forgiveness of injuries; in their disposition to show kindness to their fellow-men, and to minister to their wants; and in that simplicity and integrity with which they pursued their outward callings, and which, under the divine blessing, caused them to prosper therein, notwithstanding the heavy losses to which they were continually subjected in the faithful maintenance of their various testimonies.

Besides those particulars in their doctrine and conversation which were open to the observation of others, I find no inconsiderable evidence that God was with them of a truth, and that they were led by his Spirit, in matters more confined to themselves. Among these I would

enumerate the remarkable manner in which the divine presence and power were often manifested in their religious assemblies; the christian order and discipline which they set up and maintained among themselves; their brotherly love, and watchful care for one another's spiritual welfare; and their diligent attention to provide for the temporal necessities of their poor members, and for the care and instruction of their children.

Nor can I pass by wholly unnoticed the many remarkable circumstances recorded in their writings, which I must regard as indicating the hand of the Almighty, whether in their own preservation and deliverance in times of great suffering and danger, or in the judgments which overtook their adversaries and persecutors. It is not necessary to admit that this character rightly belongs to every incident to which it has been ascribed: but after making every allowance which a sound spirit of caution can reasonably require, I conceive enough will remain to show what the Most High was ofttimes pleased to manifest his care for them in a remarkable manner, and even by his visible providences to acknowledge them as his people.

Much as we thus find in the history of the rise and early progress of the society which attests it to have originated in a work of God, it must be acknowledged that in succeeding times no small portion of that spiritual life which had at first been manifested in it, disappeared. When trial and persecution were succeeded by outward ease and quiet, a worldly spirit soon crept in; and the enemy of all good, in seeking to lay waste the society, thus found means to pervert to his own ends that which was in itself good. The diligence, integrity, and frugality of its members, and their avoidance of the pleasures and dissipations so much followed by others, gave them peculiar advantages in their worldly business; and in too many instances success brought with it a love of gain which was incompatible with the existence of true spiritual-mindedness. Together with this evil, and indeed in natural connexion with it, tradition and form were too often substituted for the life and power of religion; so that while much that was fair and goodly appeared without, there was too often little vitality within. But to whatever extent this declension

may have proceeded, it is to be borne in mind that it was very far from being peculiar to the members of our society. Nor must we forget that, in the condescending goodness of our heavenly Father, there was still preserved among us a living remnant of such as were redeemed from the spirit of the world, and brought to experience the power of godliness; and many faithful witnesses were from time to time raised up, and enabled to testify to the sufficiency of that grace which had been so eminently manifested in the early history of the society.

EXAMINATION OF THE CHIEF DISTINGUISHING VIEWS OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS—THEIR TRUTH AND VALUE —CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

I HAVE already had occasion briefly to notice most of those religious views by which the first members of our society were distinguished from the generality of their fellow professors. I believe that, when rightly understood, they will be found in accordance with the doctrine of our Lord and his apostles; that when practically applied, they are eminently calculated to promote a true growth in grace, and in vital and experimental religion; and that our own spiritual welfare, and the advancement of the cause of christian truth, are intimately involved in our faithful maintenance of them. Influenced by this persuasion, I would solicit the serious attention of the reader, and especially of my younger friends, while I endeavour to set forth some of the grounds on which we justly value and desire still to maintain the views and practices of our forefathers in religious profession.

It has been before observed, that the end of all true religion, and that wherein indeed it essentially consists, is a change of heart and life; the bringing man from a state of enmity against God, into one of conformity to his will, and obedience to his law; and thus preparing him for eternal blessedness in the world to come. Now it is a most certain truth, and one to which the sacred volume bears constant testimony, that this change, in all its parts and stages, can be effected in no other way than by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is only by the work of the Spirit in man, that he can be convinced of sin, and brought to see his need of a Saviour; that he can experience repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; that his heart can be sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus; and that he can be made a partaker of that new and spiritual birth, without which no man can see the kingdom of heaven. It is only by the gracious influences of the same Spirit, that the work thus begun can be maintained and carried on; that the fear and love of God can be preserved and cherished in the

heart; that the will of man can be brought into conformity with the divine will; and that his spiritual life can be sustained till the end for which it was bestowed is fully accomplished, by his being made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light.

As it is only by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit that the heart of man can be renewed and changed, so is it in no other way than by the enlightening power of the same Spirit, that he can be enabled rightly to discern and understand the truth of God. Thus the apostle testifies, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

By the same enlightening power, man is instructed in the divine will, and enabled to see both that which he must do, and that which he must leave undone. And the true disciple and follower of Christ has, by the indwelling of the Spirit, a sure teacher and guide, by whom he may be instructed and led in his right path of duty, whether in the world or in the church.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit is not only a Spirit

of holiness and wisdom, but also of strength. It is only as God is pleased to strengthen us "with might by his Spirit in the inner man," and to refresh and comfort us with his life-giving presence, that we can do his will, and walk in his way; so as to be permitted in the end to hear the gracious language, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And it is only by the same Almighty power that we can be enabled to "fight the good fight of faith," to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one," to resist the evil propensities of our corrupt nature, and thus to obtain that victory to which the promise of Christ is annexed, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

It was from a deep and experimental sense of these important truths, that the first members of our society were engaged so prominently and earnestly to dwell upon the work of the Holy Spirit in man. It was nothing else than this which they meant, when they directed men to the light of Christ in their own hearts. And when we consider that without the experience

thereof, no man can be a disciple of Christ in this world, or a partaker of his glory in the world to come, may we not well ask, Can it be too much or too earnestly insisted upon? It is no mere matter of refined speculation, but one of infinite practical importance, which we press upon the attention of all, when we direct them to that without which eternal life cannot be attained. And seeing that to this end the Most High is pleased by his Spirit graciously to visit the children of men, as many can thankfully acknowledge to have known in their own experience, even from very early life, can we too earnestly invite and intreat all to give heed to these visitations of his love and mercy?

Being then, like our early Friends, deeply impressed with the unspeakable importance of these things, we are still engaged to beseech men not to resist and quench the Spirit; but to yield to that which would reprove for sin, bring into tenderness and contrition of soul, quicken in the heart the love and fear of God, and beget true repentance towards God, and living faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence also we exhort all to seek and wait for

the teaching of the Spirit, as that whereby alone they can rightly understand the things of God: carefully to give heed to those monitions in the secret of the soul, which are often heard even as "a still, small voice," pointing out the path of duty; and humbly to crave that strength whereby they may be enabled both to do and to suffer according to the will of their heavenly Father. In thus directing men to the work of the Holy Spirit in them, we know assuredly that the same power which at first gives life to the soul, can preserve and sustain it; and that they who trust therein will experience a growth in grace, a progress from the state of babes in Christ to that of young men and strong men in him, even to the measure of the stature of his fulness; and will thus be made meet for that eternal rest which is prepared for the people of God.

But though we are thus engaged to direct men to that which the Holy Spirit works in them, far be it from us to undervalue those outward means which divine wisdom has graciously provided for the spiritual help and instruction of men. While we dare not presume

to limit the operations of the Spirit by any external circumstances whatever, or to regard any part of the rational creation of God, as excluded from their gracious influence, it is certain that in regard to those who, like ourselves, have access to a revelation outwardly made known, the Holy Spirit works in connexion with the knowledge thus imparted, and therefore with the employment of outward means. Yet even in respect of those who are thus circumstanced, it is no less certain that the operations of the Spirit are often experienced independently of the direct or present use of any such means. While therefore, on the one hand, we desire that all should diligently employ those means which are placed within their reach, we are concerned, on the other, that none should in any wise limit the Spirit of God. We cannot but believe that the followers of Christ do, in the general, sustain much loss for want of a more lively apprehension and belief of the free and independent teaching of the Spirit; and being ourselves persuaded, by some measure of living experience, of its excellence and value, we invite others to taste and see for

themselves, by waiting for and giving heed to those precious influences which are as the wind that "bloweth where it listeth."

That belief in the immediate teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to which our forefathers in religious profession bore witness, and which is still dear to many of us, is in no wise at variance with a full acknowledgment of the inestimable value of the holy scriptures. The sacred volume does indeed contain the record of the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, "of those things which are most surely believed among us;" yet it is only by the immediate teaching of the Spirit of truth, that we can so receive and understand them as to be thereby made wise unto salvation. And while we know that this teaching is often imparted in immediate connexion with the perusal of the sacred volume, we also know that it is at other times vouchsafed apart from any outward exercise, when the mind, withdrawing from the contemplation of all that is external, is reverently engaged to wait upon him who is the eternal fountain of light and truth. At such seasons, the love of God is often felt to be shed abroad

in the heart, and the truths of holy scripture brought before the mind, and opened to its instruction and comfort; so that the disciple of Christ is permitted to experience some measure of the fulfilment of his gracious Master's promise concerning the Comforter, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."

Further, we cannot but account it to be a high and blessed privilege which the followers of Christ are permitted to enjoy, in the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit in regard to their appointed path of duty. A due estimate of this privilege will assuredly in no degree lessen our sense of the value of those divine precepts which are so largely set forth in the holy scriptures, and which have respect, not only to the general relations in which mankind at large stand to their Almighty Creator and to their fellow-men, but also to a great variety of their particular conditions and circumstances in life. Seeing however that the individual members of the church, the body of Christ, have their several offices, it is needful that each should know what is his proper place and duty

in the household of faith, and should be instructed as to the particular way in which he is called to approve his love and fidelity to his Lord and Master. Now in regard to this, the holy scriptures do not instruct us; and although the Almighty is pleased at times to make known to his people their appointed path of duty by the orderings of his providence, it is certain that there are very many occasions and circumstances in which his will cannot thus be discerned. Such being the case, we thankfully believe that he also bestows the immediate and perceptible guidance of his Holy Spirit upon those who seek for and trust in it. To the reality of this blessed guidance, we can do no less than bear our grateful testimony; having, as we humbly believe, been permitted to know some measure of it in our own experience, and thus to witness the truth of our Lord's gracious assurance to his disciples, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The insisting upon that part of divine truth which relates to the work of the Holy Spirit in man has, from the beginning of our religious society, been a prominent feature in those views

by which we are more or less distinguished from other bodies of professing christians. But while we regard it to be our appointed duty steadfastly to uphold it, far be it from us to undervalue, much less to reject any other. The various doctrinal truths which are made known to us in scripture, when rightly understood, not only constitute one harmonious whole, but are so intimately related to, and mutually dependent upon each other, that no one can be overlooked or neglected, without injury to the rest. Thus the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and of his work in the heart of man, will be found to have an indissoluble connexion with all those precious truths that relate to the coming of Christ in the flesh, and his propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men. As the Spirit was sent by Christ, so was he to bear witness of Christ; according to the declaration of our blessed Lord himself: "He shall testify of me. He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you."

It is cause of rejoicing that the immutable obligation of the precept, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation," and the deadness of that faith which does not yield the fruits of

righteousness, are truths more generally acknowledged and inculcated by professing christians in this day, than they were at the first rise of our society. There are however some points of great practical importance in relation to this subject which have in a somewhat peculiar manner been insisted on among us, and to which I therefore wish to invite the reader's attention.

It is well known that the necessity of obedience on the part of the followers of Christ, has been at all times much dwelt upon in the ministry and writings of our members. But however largely they may have felt themselves called upon to enforce its obligation, it may be truly said that they have not done so to an extent greater than that which the terms of the new covenant prescribes. The obligation to obedience under the gospel dispensation was fully and emphatically set forth in the prophecy of Moses respecting Christ; "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." And that which was thus predicted of Christ was abund-

antly confirmed by his own doctrine, and that of his apostles.

But the obedience which the gospel thus inculcates upon every disciple of Christ, is not such an one as man seeks to render in his own strength, or from which he vainly hopes to attain righteousness and acceptance in the divine sight. The believer in Christ well knows that he is not justified by the works of the law, but, by faith in Him who is declared to be "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The obedience to which he is called, is the fruit of his love for his Lord and Saviour; according to the declaration of Christ himself: "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments;" and again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." And thus also the apostle declares that "faith which worketh by love," is the characteristic of the true disciple of Christ.

As the love of Christ is begotten in the soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit, so the obedience which flows from it, however in itself mingled with infirmity, cannot but be well-

pleasing in the divine sight. And thus we find both our Lord and his apostles often representing those glories which are prepared for his followers in the world to come, in immediate connexion with their obedience and devotedness to him in this life. And in this view of the subject there is nothing at variance with the fullest acknowledgment of the doctrines of grace. Not only is it God alone who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; but we well know that even were we to do all that is commanded us, we should still be unprofitable servants; so that it remains a certain truth, that while death is the *wages* of sin, eternal life is the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Seeing then that obedience is thus made indispensable to discipleship, as being that without which faith and love are but empty names; and that it is therefore absolutely essential to the eternal well-being of man, we believe it to be right earnestly to press it upon the attention of all, and especially of such as may be entering on the christian course. In so doing, we know that he who requires it is no hard master; but

that to those who seek above all things to know and do his will, and who look unto him alone for wisdom and strength, he doth by his Spirit both give the knowledge of what he would have them do, and impart strength and ability to do it. And seeing that in his eternal wisdom, he leads not all his children alike, but some in one particular path of duty, and some in another, we exhort all to give diligent heed to his voice; not inquiring, "What shall this man do?" but remembering and acting upon the words of our Lord to Peter, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." And further, knowing that he is pleased at times to call for obedience, not only in things which may seem hard and difficult, but also in such as may appear to the wisdom of man little and mean, we believe it to be of deep concern to the spiritual welfare of the christian traveller, not to admit his own reasonings on the requirements of his Lord, but in simplicity and sincerity of heart to adopt the language, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

In regard both to the discernment of his appointed path of duty, and to the obtaining of

strength to walk in it, the obedient soul experiences the fulfilment of the promise, that "unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." They who diligently attend to, and faithfully follow the intimations of their heavenly guide, find that their spiritual senses become exercised by use to a more clear and full discernment of the will of God respecting them; while in the same way their capability for service is increased, so that they grow from the state of children to that of young men and of fathers in Christ. And though their faith may be at times sorely tried, they yet experience the truth of their divine Master's declaration, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and find that as the God whom they desire to serve graciously holds forth to them the prospect of those glories which are reserved for his obedient children in the world to come, so even now he is at times pleased to bestow upon them a sweet peace of soul, and a sense of his ineffable love, in the acceptance of their unworthy services, for the sake of his beloved Son.

And here I would briefly advert to a subject

closely connected with that of obedience, and like it much dwelt upon in our society,—the practice of self-denial. In pressing its necessity upon all who would be followers of Christ, we mean not to inculcate the practice of such mortifications as man devises in his own will. Far less do we regard any acts of self-denial whatever as a means whereby he can make atonement for sin, or entitle himself to the mercy and favour of God. But when, in the language of our blessed Lord, we call upon men to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him, we know certainly that there is by nature that in every man which must be denied, crucified, and slain, before he can be made meet for that heavenly kingdom into which nothing that is unholy can ever enter. It was of this that the apostle Paul spake, when he said, "knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed:" and again, "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." It was to the same evil nature that John referred, when he spake of "the lust of

the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Now as the old man, or body of sin, though existing in every child of Adam, is diversely manifested in different individuals, some exhibiting its workings in one way, and some in another, so also the particular mode in which it is to be denied and mortified, necessarily admits of a corresponding diversity. And as the Almighty is pleased by his Spirit to lead his dedicated children in their particular paths of service, so does he in like manner show them those things in which they are called upon to deny themselves, and take up their cross. As they reverently give heed to these intimations of his will, and in dependence on his strength faithfully yield obedience to them, they come to experience a progressive increase of the power of the Spirit over the flesh; or, to apply the language of the sacred historian in a spiritual sense, they find that David waxes stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul waxes weaker and weaker.

There is another point in connexion with this general subject, which has been much dwelt upon in our society, and to which I am desirous

to call the reader's attention, as being one of great practical importance; I mean the sufficiency of divine grace to deliver man from the power and bondage of sin. I formerly observed that among the prevalent errors which the early Friends felt themselves called upon to oppose, was the dangerous notion that man, while in this state of being, must necessarily continue, in a greater or lesser degree, in the commission of sin. In opposition to this, they constantly taught, that as all sin is hateful in the divine sight, so the disciples of Christ are enjoined to abstain from it in every form and appearance; and that the Most High requires nothing at the hands of his children which he will not give them strength to perform. In enforcing these doctrines, they upheld no other standard of personal holiness than that which the gospel of Christ, as taught by our Lord himself and his apostles, uniformly maintains; and we assuredly believe with them, that its maintenance deeply concerns not only our own spiritual well-being, but also the promotion of true religion among men, and the exaltation of the glory of God. But while thus insisting

on these important truths, far be it from us so to treat of them as to lead any into unprofitable discouragement, much less into despair. While we would adopt the language of the beloved disciple, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not;" we would also dwell on the precious assurance that "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." We well know that they who are farthest advanced in their christian course, not only still feel their need of divine grace to keep them from falling, but in the depth of that sense which they have of their natural condition as "children of wrath," feel the unutterable preciousness of the declaration that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

The views which were entertained by our early Friends respecting the nature of true worship, and the corresponding practices which they were led to adopt, continue to be precious to us, because we not only believe that they are consistent with the truth of God as taught by our Lord and his apostles, but also that we have felt something of their value in our own

experience. Seeing that no worship is acceptable to the Almighty but that which is in spirit and in truth, and that such can only be rendered when the soul is drawn to him by the operation of his Holy Spirit, we believe that this blessed influence ought to be reverently sought and waited for, whether in our public assemblies for worship, on occasions of a more private nature, or in our hours of retirement. It is to this end that we sit down together in silence, believing it to be neither profitable nor safe for us to engage in any vocal exercises, unless the Lord by his Spirit prepare and qualify for such service. It is not however a mere outward stillness which we commend and desire to practice; but one which is inward also, wherein the mind, seeking to abstain from the pursuit of thoughts and meditations of its own suggesting, from attempts to minister instruction to itself, and even from conceiving the language of prayer or praise in its own will, is engaged reverently to look unto the Lord alone, to receive ability to worship him acceptably, by the operation of his own Spirit. The state of mind in which we thus desire to be found is

described in the expressive language of the Psalmist, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us."

As the soul is brought into this state of humble dependence and reverent waiting upon the Lord, he is pleased, so far as he sees to be good for his people, to visit them with his life-giving presence and power; begetting in them a sense of his goodness and mercy, under which their hearts are lifted up to him in praise and thanksgiving; and enabling them also to see their own condition and wants, in the sense of which they are qualified rightly to approach him with prayer and supplication. Thus also is he pleased to minister instruction, refreshment, consolation, or whatever else may be needful to their several states, whether by the immediate teaching of his Spirit in them, or through the instrumentality of those whom he may qualify for such service.

Thus the views of our religious society on the subject of worship are closely connected with

those which we entertain respecting the exercise of christian ministry, and which we believe to be consonant with the spiritual nature of the gospel, and with the practice of the church in primitive times. We regard it to be the exclusive prerogative of Him who is the Head of the church to call into this service; to choose whom he will choose, and to send whom he will send. We cannot consider human learning to be a necessary preparation for the work of the ministry; but that they who are called to it by Christ himself stand in need of no other qualification than those spiritual gifts which we believe he is still graciously pleased to dispense to his church.[1] So also in respect of every particular exercise of the ministry, we believe that his servants can in no other way be rightly directed as to the time, place, and matter of their ministrations, than by the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. While however we cannot recognize any other authority in these things than that of God himself, we consider that they who apprehend themselves called to the work of the ministry are to be subject to

[1] See note A, p. 85.

the spiritual judgment of their brethren; and thus, as in primitive times, God is known to be the author, not of confusion, but of peace, in the assemblies of his people.[2]

Now believing, as I do, that these views of worship and ministry, are in strict accordance with the nature and spirit of the gospel dispensation; and that, when truly carried into practice, they greatly tend to the promotion of vital and experimental religion, I cannot but earnestly desire that none of my fellow-members, and especially that none of those who have heretofore had some experience of their value, may be drawn away from them. Were we more fervent in spirit, both in our hours of private retirement, and in our public assemblies, we should assuredly know more than we now do of the efficacy of true waiting upon God, and of the blessedness of being satisfied with the fatness of his house and made to drink of the river of his pleasures. And may we not also believe, that were this exercise more lively and prevalent among us, more of our number would be called publicly to testify of the grace

[2] See note B, p. 86.

of God? I am aware that our views of the nature and performance of true worship may appear to some unintelligible, and even foolishness; yet are there many among us who can still thankfully bear witness, from living experience, to their reality; and in the feeling thereof, can invite others to come, taste, and see how good the Lord is.

But while we believe that our forefathers in christian profession were led by the Spirit of truth into these views, and that we are called upon faithfully to maintain them, far be it from us to suppose that true spiritual worship, or a living and profitable ministry, is confined to ourselves. We rejoice in believing that God is ofttimes pleased to bless by his lifegiving presence those who with a true heart draw nigh unto him, though we may think that they have not attained to a full apprehension of his truth in these things. And if we do not join with others in their manner of worship and in their vocal exercises, it is because we believe it to be our proper place in the christian church to hold up to our fellow-professors that spiritual standard to which we ourselves have been

brought. Nor can we doubt that in proportion as the minds of men come more fully to discern the true character of the gospel dispensation, they will increasingly apprehend the spiritual nature of worship, and the true ground and authority of christian ministry. We trust that we may, without thinking highly of ourselves, or meanly of our fellow-christians, walk by that rule to which we have attained; regarding it as being the most expressive of our sense of dependence upon divine help for the performance of true worship, and of our reliance upon the faithfulness of Him who, being Head over all things to his body the church, hath graciously promised to abide with his people for ever, and to teach and lead them by his Spirit.

Among those things, in regard to which I believe that our forefathers in profession were led and taught by the Spirit of truth, were their views respecting baptism and the supper. It is not my purpose to enter into an argumentative statement on this subject; but simply to invite the reader's attention to some considerations which appear to me to show the value of those spiritual views in which we have

been educated. There is a baptism spoken of in scripture, without which no man can be a living member of the church of Christ; even that of which the apostle spake when he said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." And there is a supper without the participation of which none of us can have eternal life; even that of which our Lord spake, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." These are spiritual things, pertaining to the exercise of that living faith by which the members of Christ are united to him their holy Head. They have no necessary connexion with any outward rite or symbol; for they are often experienced where these are wanting; and wanting where these are employed. And seeing that they are essential, so that without them the christian name is but an empty profession, we feel ourselves engaged to invite all to come to the knowledge of these things, where alone they can be known, even

in the heart, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

While we thus insist upon that which is spiritual and essential, we are not ignorant that baptism by water, and the outward partaking of bread and wine, were practices in use among the early christians. As however we cannot regard these rites as forming in themselves any proper or essential part of the gospel dispensation, so neither can we find any thing in the language of our Lord or his apostles, which implies that they were to be perpetually observed in the church, much less to be enjoined and made obligatory on all its members. Like our predecessors, we believe that we are called upon to bear our testimony in the sight of the professing church of Christ, that, while the baptism and supper which are spiritual are things essential and indispensable, no outward rite whatever either possesses this character, or is enjoined upon his disciples. In doing so, far be it however from us to judge our fellow-professors who may deem it to be right for them to practise these observances. To our own

Master we must each of us stand or fall. But uniting, as I do, in the above views, I cannot but affectionately desire that none of my fellow-members who have known what it is to be baptized by the one Spirit into the one body, and inwardly to partake of the flesh and blood of Christ, may be led to think that they stand in need of any outward observances, and thus, after having begun in the Spirit, be induced in any wise to seek to be made perfect by the flesh. And yet more earnestly would I warn those who have not hitherto experienced these things, against falling into the snare of the enemy, by trusting to an outward rite for that which can only be possessed by an inward work of grace.

Another of the testimonies of our early Friends, to which I would advert as being justly precious to us, is that against war, both offensive and defensive. It is grounded on the plain and comprehensive precepts of our Lord and his apostle, "Love your enemies"—"Render to no man evil for evil." Its consistent maintenance by the members of our society, often under circumstances of great personal loss

and suffering, has doubtless powerfully contributed to awaken the attention of others to the subject, and to open the eyes of many to see that war is opposed to the spirit and precepts of the gospel. But while we rejoice that this is the case, let us not lose sight of our own proper path of duty. We have ever thought ourselves called upon, not merely to make a profession of our views on this subject, but also, at whatever personal cost, to see that our conduct corresponds therewith. May we never deviate from this course; but approving ourselves faithful servants of the Prince of peace, be instrumental in hastening the coming of that blessed period, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

The testimony which was from the first borne by our society against oaths and swearing, was founded on a conscientious compliance with the precepts of our Lord and his apostle James. It was moreover a testimony to the unchangeable obligation which rests upon every disciple of Christ, to speak the truth in all things. We may rejoice that our views on this subject,

as well as on that of war, have seemed of late years to produce no small influence on the opinions of many others; and as one result of this, we are no longer subjected to those disabilities and sufferings to which our forefathers were exposed. But assuredly the call upon us is not less urgent than at any former period, stedfastly to maintain our principle, under all circumstances whatever. By so doing, we may reasonably hope that that principle will progressively make its way among the followers of Christ; and that they will increasingly come to see the true scope and comprehensiveness of their divine Master's precept, "Swear not at all."

Amongst those testimonies which the first members of our society believed themselves called upon to bear, there was perhaps none in the maintenance of which they were subjected to greater suffering, than that against tithes and other ecclesiastical demands, as being directly opposed to the nature of the new covenant dispensation, and to the precept of Christ to his apostles, "Freely ye have received: freely give." And although in this, as in the preceding cases,

the views upheld by our society have of late gained ground among others to no small extent, and we ourselves are relieved from much of that personal suffering to which our predecessors were subjected, I believe it was never more incumbent upon us faithfully to adhere to our principle in this matter. By so doing, we shall conspicuously uphold in the sight of the christian church the great principle of the freeness of the gospel of Christ; and shall most effectually commend those views respecting the right authority and exercise of the ministry, which we believe not only to be in accordance with the truth of the gospel, but also to have an important relation to its efficacious publication and reception among the nations of the world.

In enumerating those things which appear to me to be truly valuable in the profession handed down to us from our forefathers, I can by no means omit that plainness, simplicity, and truth, which they believed themselves called to observe in their language, behaviour, and mode of attire; and in their conscientious adherence to which they were content to suffer reproach and injury. I readily admit that peculiarities of this kind

have no virtue in themselves, and that they are capable of grievous abuse by being made substitutes for vital religion. As however I believe that they had their origin among us in principles truly christian, so I am persuaded that when maintained on the same principles, they are of no small value and excellence.

It is well known that the use of the plural number in addressing single persons, and that of the various complimentary titles, phrases, and gestures, which are common among men, had their origin in the pride of the human heart, and in a disposition to gratify and flatter it. Nor can it, I think, be accounted less certain that these things are not in accordance with that strict adherence to simplicity and truth which the purity of the gospel demands. We believe therefore that, like the first members of our society, we are called to abstain from them; and thus to bear a standing testimony before men against that spirit in which they had their origin; seeking in all things to commend our profession as followers of Christ by a demeanour in accordance with the precepts and example of our Lord and his apostles.

With regard to plainness in attire, we do not plead for any thing which consists merely in peculiarity of costume, though this may have its contingent advantages. But in adhering, with little variation, to the same simple mode of dress, adopting such changes only as are recommended by obvious convenience, we bear, as in the preceding case, an open and continued testimony against that which is undoubtedly evil in its nature and origin; namely, the pride, vanity, and waste of fashion. Let not any account these things little or unimportant; for assuredly nothing can be rightly so accounted which is comprehended under the emphatic precept, "Be ye not conformed to this world."

In addition to those various particulars which I have thus enumerated, as originally professed by our early Friends, and still justly prized by us, I wish further to call the attention of my fellow-members to a subject which I conceive to be of no small moment to their religious welfare. Our society has from the first recognized, more explicitly and practically than most other professing christians, the great principle, that as Christ is the alone rightful Head of

the church, so he has graciously promised to be present with and preside over it by the Spirit. It was to his wisdom and guidance that our predecessors looked in making provision for the maintenance of christian order and discipline; and as I formerly observed, the issue of their labours appears to me to bear a striking evidence that they sought it not in vain. Such being my impression, I cannot but esteem it as a privilege of no small value, to be brought under the influence of the christian care and oversight which is thus provided, and to be permitted to partake of the benefit of an order of things so consonant with the spirit of the gospel, and so conducive to the maintenance and growth of brotherly love and unity.

I have thus adverted to several particulars, more or less peculiar to our christian profession, which appear to me to have a value and excellence that justly claim our attachment and adherence to it. If there is ground to believe that the standard which we have held up in regard to these and other things, has already had no inconsiderable influence in producing a higher estimate, among many of the professors

of christianity, of the spirituality and purity of the gospel, may we not reasonably indulge the hope that, if we are found faithfully adhering to it, this influence will increase both in degree and extent? Let us not then forsake our appointed station in the church; but while we are careful to avoid all unchristian judgment of others, let us remember that it deeply concerns the wellbeing of our own souls, and the advancement of our blessed Redeemer's cause, that we be found faithfully walking in that particular path which he has assigned us. And would that the prevalence of vital godliness among us bore a more impressive testimony to the truth and efficacy of those views by which our christian profession is distinguished!

If in the preceding pages I have chiefly dwelt on these distinguishing views, it has been a necessary consequence of the immediate object for which they were written. I trust it will not be imputed either to myself or my fellow-members, that those parts of divine truth which we hold in common with others, are less precious to us than to them. Building on the foundation of apostles and prophets, we profess

no other faith than that which was once delivered to the saints; neither have we any other hope than that of the gospel, even as it is set forth in the declaration that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And now, in conclusion, unworthy as I feel myself to appear in such a character, I would offer a few words of affectionate exhortation to my beloved younger friends. Be concerned, I beseech you, to cultivate a humble, child-like, teachable state of mind; remembering the words of our blessed Lord, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Beware of stretching yourselves beyond your present measure of spiritual wisdom and strength, of exercising yourselves in things too high for you, or of indulging in a critical and captious spirit; but in lowliness of mind look unto the Lord for wisdom to direct, and strength to uphold your steps in his paths.

And be not slothful in the great work that is before you, but give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Be fervent in spirit, waiting upon the Lord in public and in private; not discouraged if you have few opportunities of hearing outward ministry, but remembering the gracious promise of the Lord Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And where he, the minister of the sanctuary is, his people will assuredly not be destitute of that help and instruction which are needful for them.

Be diligent in reading the holy scriptures, in humble dependence on the enlightening influence of the Spirit of truth, that thereby you may be made wise unto salvation through faith that is in Jesus Christ. But while you seek to attain a right understanding of the precious truths which they contain, ever remember that that religion which only exercises the understanding, without changing the heart, is vain. Let the words of the apostle be often present to your minds, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love (or charity) edifieth."

Beware of that which is only superficial in religion; constantly bearing in mind the solemn truth declared by our Lord, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and that they only who "are led by the Spirit of God" are truly "the sons of God." Be willing to take up your cross and follow Christ; entering in at the strait gate, and walking in the narrow way, which alone leads to life eternal. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world;" seek not its greatness, its riches, or its pleasures; but "set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Be not ashamed to confess Christ before men, that he also may confess you before his Father who is in heaven; and stumble not at those unalterable terms of discipleship which he himself declared, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Despise not the day of small things. Be faithful in the little, and you shall in due season be made rulers over more. Whatsoever your Lord and Master makes known to you as his will, that do; not reasoning about his requir-

ings, but simply and unreservedly yielding yourselves to them. Be assured that with faithfulness and obedience, your spiritual strength and understanding will grow; and thus will you receive a larger measure of capacity to serve him in whatever way he may see meet to employ you for the advancement of his blessed truth, and for the exaltation of his great and glorious name.

Be often found seeking unto the Lord that he would be pleased to open your spiritual eye to discern your real condition and state in his sight. Let the prayer of the Psalmist often be yours, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Thus, beloved friends, shall you grow in grace, in spiritual stature and strength. Thus shall you be blessed in yourselves, and be made a blessing to others. And thus, when you are called to quit this pilgrimage state, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

" Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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## Note A.

*On Spiritual Gifts.*—Although we have reason to believe that some of the spiritual gifts which were bestowed upon the primitive church, as, for example, those of tongues and their interpretation, wholly or in great measure disappeared at an early period of its history, the continuance of others is attested by a cloud of witnesses, of various names among men, and in successive ages, down to our own times. Indeed when we call to mind the promise of our blessed Lord, that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, should abide with his followers for ever, it surely cannot be doubted that he still continues to impart his gifts unto

them. We can bear our thankful testimony that He who in the first age of the church "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," is still graciously pleased to bestow such gifts as he sees meet, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And we can further bear witness that among the several ways in which he thus continues to manifest his presence with his church, he is pleased at times, for the accomplishment of his own purpose and will, to impart to his servants a knowledge of "things to come," or of such as, though past or present, could not be known to them by any merely natural means.

## Note B.

*On the Ministry.*—There seems to be no little misconception prevailing on the subject of our views respecting the exercise of the ministry. We sometimes hear it said that our ministers profess to speak by inspiration: and if this term be understood to denote the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, in pointing out the service to be performed, in qualifying for it, and directing in it, we certainly regard it as essential to the right exercise of the ministry. Yet so little has the term itself been made use of by the society, that I doubt whether it is to be found, either in Robert

Barclay's Proposition on the Ministry, or in those parts of our "Book of Rules and Advices" which relate to that subject.

It is assuredly our belief that they who are rightly called to the work of the ministry, and who, in regard to its exercise, are concerned reverently to wait upon the Lord, not venturing to engage in any service into which they are not led by the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, are thereby instructed both when to speak, and what to say; and are endued with ability and strength for the service into which they are called, such as they have not at their own command. With regard however to the *measure* of such spiritual influences, we well know that there is much diversity, not only between different ministers, but also between different services of the same minister. We dare not affix any limits to the extent of this measure, believing that the Holy Spirit "divideth to every man severally as he will;" but we do not hesitate to admit, not only that the services of rightly appointed and qualified ministers may receive a particular character from their several habits of thought and expression, but also that they may be found at times more or less marked by their peculiar infirmities, and attended by other indications of human frailty and imperfection.

Such things may well humble us, and teach us not to overrate the spiritual gifts and attainments